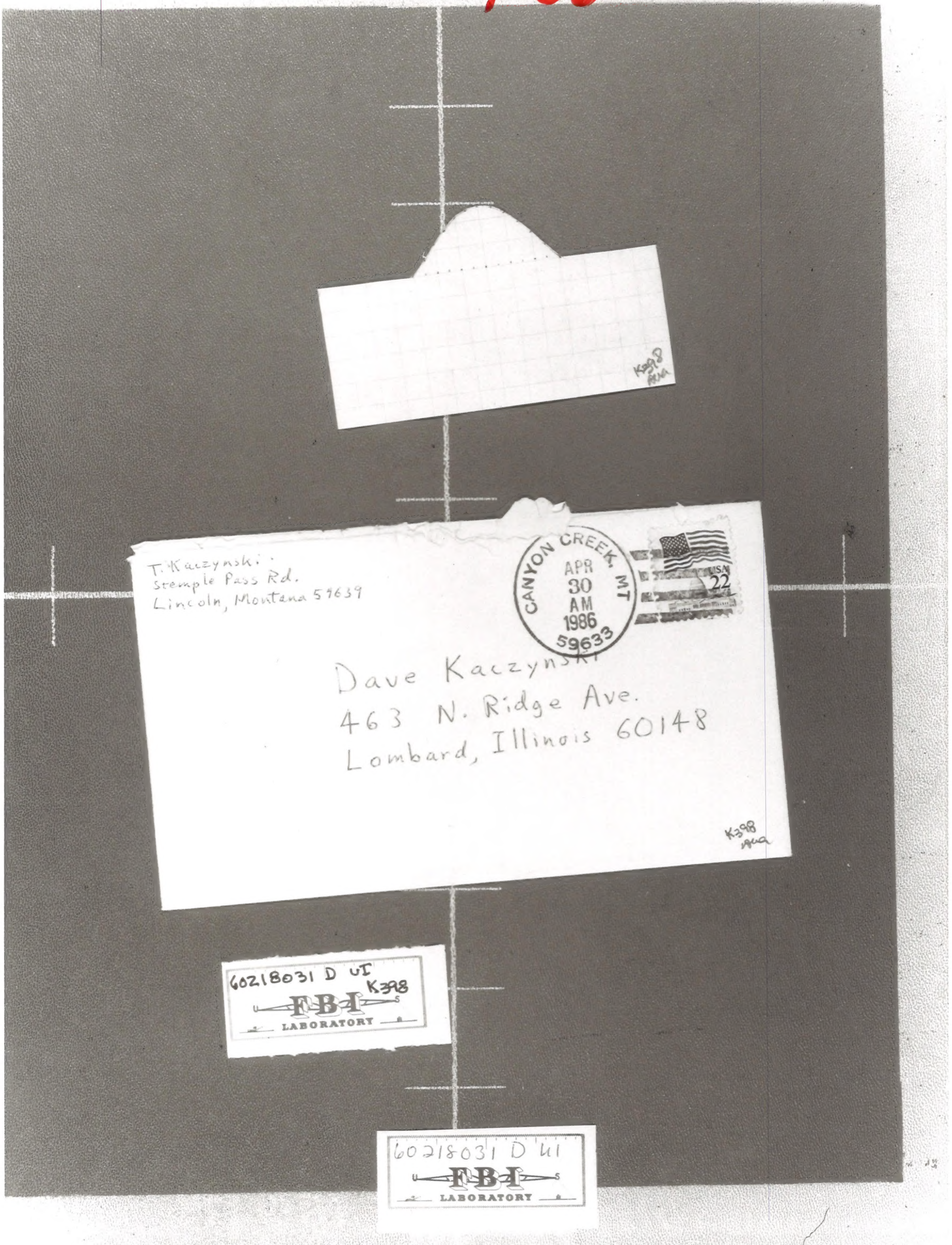
T-36


K398
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Dear Dave:

(shortly after receiving your letter that got me mad)

I recently sent a note to our parents saying simply, "I need about $6,000.00 for medical reasons." Actually I had no immediate need for the money. As for my heart acting funny, I'm confident that what that needs is simply to avoid tension as much as possible. So for the present I am not going to go to a specialist just to have him tell me what I already know — especially since just making the trip to the specialist would itself involve considerable tension. You know, it's a big pain in the ass for me just to get to Helena. Anyway I'd just as soon die as become a slave to pills and doctors.

The reason I sent that note was because I was angry and wanted to punish them by subjecting them to the conflict between their greed and their anxiety. The idea was sort of suggested by your recommending to me last winter that I ought to ask them for money if I needed it for medical reasons. If they sent me any money I could either keep it or send it back contemptuously as the humor might suit me. Of course I can always use the money anyway, so perhaps I would keep it. But mainly I just wanted to hurt them because my anger had been stirred up by your letter.

However, I'm afraid you might object to this, and with some justification. Not that I feel you have the right to intervene in any disputes between me and the parents. But it's possible that you might feel you were in some sense a party to this nasty trick I played on them: For one thing,

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I was of course relying on the assumption that you would tell them that my heart is prone to act funny; for another thing, you had suggested to me that I should ask them for money; and finally, it was your letter that got me stirred up against them.

So, out of consideration for your feelings, and not out of consideration for our parents (I don't give a shit about them), I'll say this:

1. If you like, you can tell them that I sent that note just to punish them and not because I had an immediate need for the money. It would be interesting, however, if you would hold off for a while on telling them, just to see what will be the outcome between their love for money and their supposed love for their kids. You can always tell them later, after you see what they decide to do.

2. If they actually do send me money, I will send it back not to them but to you, and you can do what you want with it, which I assume will be (unfortunately) to give it back to them. They spoke of giving me an advance on the $600.00 that they usually send me for my birthday. If they send me that I'll just keep it, since it's what they were going to send me anyway, but if they send me anything beyond that I'll send it to you.

I trust this will sufficiently mollify your presumably outraged feelings. You know, if I really did need money for doctor bills that's just when I would not ask them for it.

For your information I'll quote in full the letter they sent me after they got my note:

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K398 (3)

Text of letter

↓

To judge from difference of pen and handwriting, this first part is written by Ma, second part by Dad

Dear T.J.,

Please be more specific. Fill us in with details.

Have you explored the possibilities of public assistance? Medicaid? Social Security disability payments? County hospital?

Have you any savings left or health insurance?

Can arrangements be made for monthly payments with doctor and/or hospital?

Let us know what your problem is all about.

second part (presumably by Dad) →

Can you understand our resentment that you totally disassociated yourself from us yet in time of need call for our assistance!!!

The last couple of years have been painful. Your rejection, we feel, is unfair, uncalled for and at the least shows lack of understanding, tolerance or a sense of family.

Right now we can give you an advance on what we have been sending you yearly. In the meantime, please respond to the above questions.

Your father

(Though he spoke of an "advance", he did not enclose any money.)

The difference between this letter and your very generous response when I merely mentioned that I had a health problem, is quite striking. All the more so considering that you have much less money than they do — as you said yourself, they

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have more money than they can spend anyway.

Now, I want to make it clear that I do not consider that they owe it to me to send me money. What they owe me has nothing to do with money, and they couldn't pay it off with any amount of money, no matter how large. But the letter does reveal their selfishness and hypocrisy.

Their self-righteousness is actually funny! I am grinning broadly at it as I write this. Note where the old son of a bitch accuses me of a lack of understanding and tolerance! When I was a kid, if I annoyed him he would insult me in the most cutting way, calling me "sick", "immature", "mind of a 2-year old", and if I talked back it was "speak respectfully to your parents or we'll throw you out of the house" — and now he accuses me of a "lack of understanding and tolerance"!! Can you believe it? Not that I claim to be understanding and tolerant. But it's like a thief who steals something from somebody and then accuses his victim of dishonesty. I am reminded of the fact that Hitler accused the leaders of the western democracies of being "hysterical war-mongers".

Can you wonder at the fact that I won't forgive them? If they had ever shown any remorse, any sense of having mistreated me and wanting to make up for it, I might have forgiven them. But after all this time and all the words we've had over it, it is quite clear that they will never change. So you might as

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well give up the idea that there will ever be a reconciliation between me and them.

You claim to have seen "guilt" expressed in their faces during discussions of this subject. I don't believe it! How can you square it with the tone of that letter, for example? I mean, I'm not questioning your honesty — I just believe you're mistaken. Perhaps their faces were expressing not guilt but the tension between (on the one hand) the difficulty of denying that they had mistreated me, and (on the other hand) their need to maintain their sense of moral superiority.

— Ted

P.S. You can write to me whenever you like, but please <u>DON'T</u> try to psychoanalyse me, and <u>TRY</u> not to get me upset. It's no use trying to reconcile me with our parents, because only a complete and lasting change in their attitude would accomplish that and it's clear by now that their self-righteousness is incorrigible.

— Ted

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